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City and County of San Francisco

Results of the 1998 Citizen Survey

Edward Harrington, Controller

Prepared by Anne M. Jenkins, with assistance from the
Public Research Institute, San Francisco State University

September 1998

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Survey Conducted February – March 1998

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Citizen Survey

The San Francisco Citizen Survey is part of an ongoing effort to measure and improve the performance of City government. One of the most direct ways to measure the outcomes of the City's efforts—that is, the extent to which services are having their desired results—is to ask the users of those services. The 1998 Citizen Survey is the third annual survey conducted by the Controller's office for the City and County of San Francisco. In this third year, we continue to:

- measure changes over time in citizens' opinions of services such as libraries, parks and Muni;
- introduce new questions—on water quality and telecommunications; and
- seek the best ways to measure citizens' opinions.

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Major Findings in 1998

- Satisfaction with the **general performance of City government** is about the same in 1998 as in 1997, with **half** of the respondents choosing a **fair** rating. About 36% said City government is doing a **good** or **very good** job. We did not find differences in opinion by region of the City.

- **Safety** and **crime** responses are similar to last year. On average, San Franciscans feel safe to neutral in the daytime and in their own neighborhoods, but more than half feel unsafe or very unsafe at night in nearby parks or downtown. Residents of the **Southeast** region of the City feel **less safe** than those who live in other neighborhoods.

- Ratings of grounds and facilities in **City parks** have **declined** since last year. Those rating park grounds as **good** or **very good** have dropped to **58%** from 67% in 1997.

- **Dissatisfaction** with **Muni's timeliness** continues, while opinions of **cleanliness** and **fares** have **improved** slightly from 1997.

- More than half of respondents rate **water** quality and taste **good** or **very good**.

- A large proportion of survey respondents have **home computers** and access to the **Internet**. There is considerable variation, however, by neighborhood.

Who Participates?

We surveyed a total of 1,942 San Franciscans, using two methods – a written questionnaire and telephone interviews. Of the total sample, 80% (1,563) were surveyed by mail, and 20% (379) were questioned by telephone. Response rates were 33% for the mail survey (1563 completed questionnaires out of 4,760 mailed and deliverable) and 64% for the telephone (379 completed interviews out of 596 answered calls).

The respondents to the 1998 Citizen Survey resemble the City's population in the distribution by sex and age. The addition of the telephone survey has enabled us to reach more young residents and recent arrivals to the City. We also oversample in neighborhoods with traditionally low response rates. We still find that survey respondents on average:

- are more educated;
- are more likely to be full-time workers;
- live in larger households;
- include fewer African-American and Latino residents; and
- have been in San Francisco longer

than the population as a whole. For some of these population characteristics, however, we are comparing our survey results with data from the 1990 Census. Some of the differences may be explained by actual changes in the City's population since 1990.

Interpreting Trends

Because our sampling methods have changed with the addition of the telephone survey, we cannot necessarily conclude that a change in the rating of a service reflects an actual change in quality; it may result from differences between the groups of people responding. However, we find many similarities in the responses to the 1997 and 1998 surveys, in both opinions and demographic characteristics.

Results of the 1998 Citizen Survey

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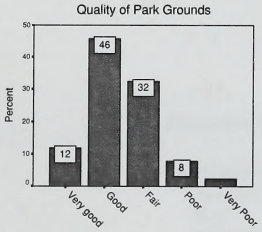
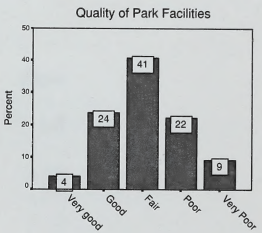
SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

PARKS AND RECREATION





1. In general, how do you rate the quality of the City's parks in the following categories?

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES*	MEAN SCORE**
♦ grounds (landscaping, plantings)	12%	46%	32%	8%	2%	1829	2.43
♦ facilities (cleanliness, maintenance)	4%	24%	41%	22%	9%	1745	3.09

2. In the past **year**, how often did you:

	AT LEAST ONCE/WEEK	AT LEAST ONCE/MONTH	SEVERAL TIMES/YEAR	ONCE OR TWICE/YEAR	NEVER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
♦ visit Golden Gate Park?	15%	21%	33%	23%	8%	1913
♦ visit other City parks?	15%	17%	27%	25%	16%	1856

* Number of responses to each question, excluding "Have not used" responses to quality questions.
** A lower mean score is more favorable.

- Overall, quality ratings of park grounds and facilities are **less favorable** in 1998 than in 1997. This change occurred among residents of every region of the city.
- Those rating park **grounds** as **good** or **very good** have dropped to **58%** from 67% in 1997.
- Park **facilities** received more **unfavorable** ratings (31%) than **favorable** ones (28%).
- The **frequency of visits** to parks remains about the same as in 1997, for Golden Gate Park and others.
- Frequent visitors (once a month or more) to **Golden Gate Park** rate grounds better, and facilities worse, than those who visit less often.
- Respondents living in the **Southeast** region of the city rate quality of park grounds worse than do those living in the Central, Northern and Western regions.
- As we would expect, residents of the West side of the City were found to visit Golden Gate Park most often, followed by Central residents.

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3. In general, how do you rate the City's recreation programs and facilities (such as recreation/ community centers, playgrounds, drama and dance classes, art centers, summer day camps, etc.)?

- ♦ convenience (location, hours)
- ♦ cost
- ♦ quality of programs

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES*	MEAN SCORE**
convenience	11%	41%	37%	8%	3%	887	2.50
cost	11%	36%	43%	7%	3%	820	2.54
quality	9%	39%	41%	8%	3%	824	2.56

Did anyone in your household take part in a City recreation activity in the past year?

Percentage of respondents reporting someone had participated in a recreational activity

AGE 12 & UNDER	AGE 13 TO 18	AGE 19 TO 54	AGE 55 & OVER
7%	3%	10%	5%

- Ratings of and participation in recreation programs **have not changed** significantly since 1997.
- About half of survey respondents indicate they have not used City recreation programs.
- Of those who did rate recreation programs, about half chose **good** or **very good** for convenience, cost and quality. Another 40% chose **fair**.

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* Number of responses to each question, excluding "Have not used" responses to quality questions.

** A lower mean score is more favorable.

MUNI

4. In general, how do you rate the quality of the Muni transit system in the following categories?

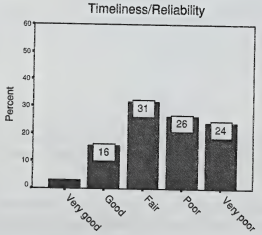
- convenience of routes
- timeliness/reliability
- cleanliness
- fares
- safety
- courtesy of drivers

VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE**
20%	48%	23%	5%	4%	1736	2.25
3%	16%	31%	26%	24%	1710	3.52
2%	15%	41%	28%	14%	1723	3.37
15%	37%	39%	6%	3%	1723	2.47
4%	27%	40%	20%	9%	1703	3.03
6%	27%	41%	15%	11%	1719	2.98

5. In a typical month, how often do you ride Muni?

DAILY	SEVERAL TIMES/WEEK	ONCE OR TWICE/WEEK	SEVERAL TIMES/ MONTH	ONCE OR TWICE/ MONTH	NEVER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
31%	18%	11%	11%	20%	9%	1767

- Ratings of Muni service in 1998 are mostly similar to 1997 ratings.
- The **route structure** is considered **good** or **very good** by more than two-thirds of respondents.
- Dissatisfaction with **timeliness/reliability** continues; **half** of respondents rate Muni **poor** or **very poor** in this area.
- **Frequent users** (several times a week or more) rate Muni significantly worse in the areas of cleanliness, courtesy of drivers and timeliness/reliability than infrequent users.
- Full-time workers rate timeliness and reliability of Muni worse than non-working respondents do. Those with four years or more of college rate timeliness and reliability worse than do respondents with a high school education or less.
- Respondents under 20 years of age are the most likely age group to be frequent Muni riders, while those older than 74 are least likely to be frequent users.
- **Cleanliness** ratings are **slightly better** this year, although they still fall on average between **fair** and **poor**.
- **Fares** are rated **fair or better** by 91% of respondents, up slightly from last year.



** A lower mean score is more favorable.

LIBRARIES

6. In general, how do you rate the quality of the City's libraries in the following categories?

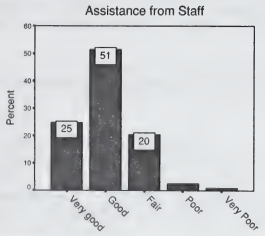
- collections of books, tapes, etc.
- convenience of hours
- assistance from library staff
- computer resources
- programs and activities for children

VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE**
17%	49%	26%	7%	1%	1313	2.27
13%	48%	29%	9%	1%	1323	2.38
25%	51%	20%	3%	1%	1278	2.03
14%	48%	29%	7%	2%	1008	2.35
20%	47%	27%	5%	1%	733	2.20

7. In the past year, how often did you:

- visit the City's Main library?
- visit branch libraries?
- contact a City library by telephone?
- contact a City library by computer?

AT LEAST ONCE/WEEK	AT LEAST ONCE/MONTH	SEVERAL TIMES/YEAR	ONCE OR TWICE/YEAR	NEVER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
5%	13%	22%	23%	37%	1765
8%	18%	22%	17%	35%	1743
1%	4%	9%	18%	68%	1725
1%	2%	4%	5%	88%	1721



- Ratings of library services are generally the same as last year. **Staff assistance** continues to receive high marks in 1998 (76% good or very good); other library ratings range from 61% to 67% favorable.
- Frequency of visits is about the same as last year. **Frequent branch library users** (once a month or more) are more likely to rate the quality of library materials, convenience of hours, and staff assistance as being very good than are infrequent users.
- Respondents with at least some college education are more likely to visit the library than are less educated citizens, and frequent users are more likely to be college graduates than infrequent users are. Respondents with four years or more of college education rank collections less favorably than less educated respondents do.
- Respondents who are between 30 and 44 years of age rank the convenience of library hours worse than any other age category.

** A lower mean score is more favorable.

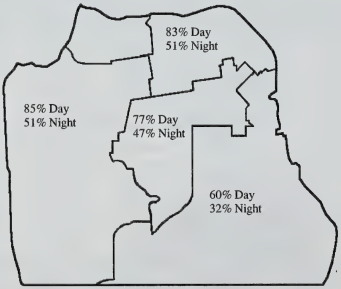
PUBLIC SAFETY

8. How safe would you feel walking alone:	VERY SAFE 1	SAFE 2	NEITHER SAFE NOR UNSAFE 3	UNSAFE 4	VERY UNSAFE 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE
during the day							
♦ in your neighborhood?	34%	42%	16%	6%	2%	1925	2.00
♦ in the park closest to you?	19%	40%	23%	14%	4%	1896	2.46
♦ downtown?	16%	43%	27%	11%	3%	1897	2.42
at night							
♦ in your neighborhood?	11%	34%	26%	19%	10%	1908	2.85
♦ in the park closest to you?	2%	11%	22%	38%	27%	1863	3.75
♦ downtown?	2%	17%	31%	33%	17%	1865	3.46
How safe do you feel crossing the street?	8%	32%	31%	21%	8%	1898	2.89

- Survey respondents feel **about as safe** in 1998 as in 1997. On average, San Franciscans feel safe to neutral in the daytime and in their own neighborhoods, but more than half feel unsafe or very unsafe at night in nearby parks or downtown.

- **Southeast** residents feel **less safe** walking alone in their neighborhoods or in the park, day or night, than those in all other sections of the city.

- Residents in the North and Central regions feel safer walking downtown during the day than residents in the West and Southeast regions. They also feel safer walking downtown at night compared to people in the Southeast.



Percentage of survey respondents who feel safe or very safe walking alone in their neighborhoods

- Generally, **younger** respondents feel a greater sense of safety. For instance, respondents under 20 years of age feel much safer crossing the street and walking alone in their neighborhoods at any time of day than those 60 and older. Those 60 and older feel less safe in their neighborhoods at night than do younger residents.
- White respondents report feeling safer than African-Americans, Asians, Latinos, and respondents of "other" ethnicity about walking in their neighborhoods, day or night, or walking downtown or in the park in the day.
- Men report feeling safer walking downtown at any time, and walking at night than do women.

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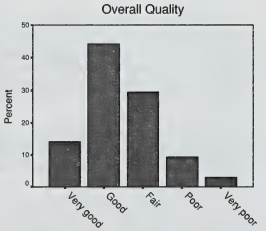
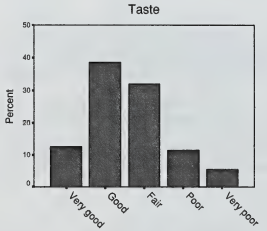
9. Have you been a victim of a crime during the last twelve months, and if so, was it reported to police? (If more than once, please answer for *the last time*.)

	WAS VICTIM OF CRIME, REPORTED TO POLICE	WAS VICTIM OF CRIME, DID NOT REPORT	WAS VICTIM OF CRIME, TOTAL	WAS NOT VICTIM OF CRIME	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
♦ Violent crime (mugging, rape, assault, battering, etc.)	4%	2%	6%	94%	1777
♦ Nonviolent crime (burglary, car theft, etc.)	11%	9%	20%	80%	1774

- 20% of the respondents were victims of a nonviolent crime within the last 12 months, and 7% were victims of a violent crime. Crime victims reported 59% of violent crimes and 56% of nonviolent crimes to the police.
- Respondents **under 20 years old** are more likely to be victims of violent crimes than residents in other age groups are. While the frequency of violent crime ranged from 3% to 7% among respondents aged 20 and older, 20% of the 18- and 19-year-olds surveyed had experienced violent crime in the past year.
- Residents aged between 20 and 29 years old are more likely to be victims of nonviolent crimes than residents 45 and older.
- Respondents with less than high school are more likely to be victims of violent crimes than respondents with higher levels of education.
- Men experienced more nonviolent crimes than women. Unlike in 1997, when men experienced more violent crimes, no differences by gender were found in the incidence of violent crimes this year.

WATER QUALITY





10. How would you rate the quality of the tap water in your home?

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES	MEAN SCORE
♦ overall quality	14%	44%	30%	9%	3%	1876	2.43
♦ taste	12%	39%	32%	11%	6%	1841	2.59

- ❖ Overall, 58% of the respondents rate the **overall quality** of tap water **good** or **very good**. Only 12% rate water quality poor or very poor.
- ❖ 52% of respondents rate the **taste** of tap water in their home **good** or **very good**.
- ❖ Water ratings were less favorable in the Southeast than in other regions of the City.
- ❖ Generally, the older the respondents are, the better they rank the overall quality of tap water in their home. Long time residents of San Francisco (over 10 years) rate quality and taste higher than residents of 1 to 4 years.
- ❖ Homeowners rate the overall quality and taste of tap water higher than do renters.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

11. Does anyone in your household:

- have a personal computer at home?
- use a personal computer to reach the Internet from home?
- use a personal computer and modem to conduct work or research from home?

Yes	No	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
62%	38%	1906
49%	51%	1784
43%	57%	1787

- People with **four years or more of college** are more likely to have a personal computer at home, to reach the Internet from home, and conduct work or research with their personal computer than people who have less education. Our survey sample has a large proportion of college-educated respondents, and thus may overstate the incidence of computer and Internet use somewhat.

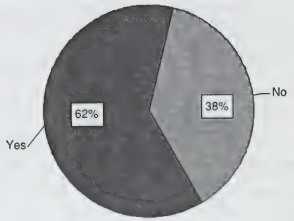
- **Full-time workers** are more likely to have a personal computer at home than respondents who do not work. Generally, the respondents who work 35 hours or more are more likely to use their computer to reach the Internet, and those who work 1 to 14 hours a week are more likely to conduct work or research from home than the respondents who do not work.

- Residents **under 45 years old** are more likely to have a personal computer at home than older residents (60 and over). Those under 30 are also more likely to reach the Internet from home and conduct work or research using their personal computer than older residents

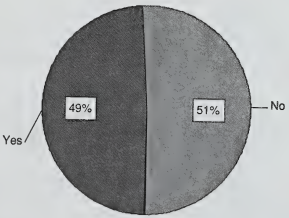
- Latino residents report less ownership of personal computers than Asian and white San Franciscans. White respondents are more likely to conduct work from home by computer than African-American, Latino, and Asian residents. Along with those in the "other" ethnic category, more white respondents also report reaching the Internet than do African-American and Latino respondents.

- Residents of the **North** and **Southeast** regions of the City have **lower levels of computer ownership** than those in the Central and West regions. The Southeast also has the lowest levels of Internet access and conducting research or work from home, while the Central region has the highest levels.

Computer at Home?



Reach the Internet from Home?



12. How many telephone lines currently provide service to your home?

1	2	3 or more	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
63%	27%	10%	1845

Do you use any of these lines primarily for fax machine or computer modem?

Yes	No	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
31%	69%	1861

If YES, how many of them?

1	2 or more	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
88%	12%	543

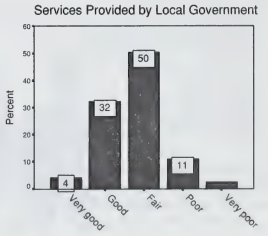
- **Homeowners** reported having more telephone lines, and using at least one line primarily for fax or computer modem more so than do renters.
- Residents between ages of 30 and 59 are more likely to have more telephone lines than residents of 60 and older. Residents over 60 are less likely to use any of their phone lines primarily for fax or computer modem than residents in other age groups.
- Respondents with **four or more years of college** reported having more phone lines and using one line primarily for fax or modem in a greater proportion than respondents with high school or less than high school.
- Residents who reported working 35 hours or more a week use at least one of their telephone lines primarily for fax machines or computer modems in a greater proportion than residents who work fewer hours do.

GENERAL CITY PERFORMANCE

13. Overall, how good a job do you think local government is doing at providing services?

	VERY GOOD 1	GOOD 2	FAIR 3	POOR 4	VERY POOR 5	NUMBER OF RESPONSES*	MEAN SCORE**
1998 Survey	4%	32%	50%	11%	3%	1849	2.76
1997 Survey	5%	31%	52%	9%	3%	1197	2.75
1996 Survey	2%	23%	56%	14%	5%	1738	2.97

- The most common response to this question is "fair," as it has been each year. The distribution of answers to this question is essentially the same as in 1997.
- As in 1997, there is no significant difference in ratings of local government performance by region of the City.
- Residents who have lived in San Francisco for over 10 years rate the services provided by local government less favorably than do residents of 9 years or less.
- Respondents age 45 to 59 rank the services significantly lower than the respondents over 60.



* Number of responses to each question, excluding "Have not used" responses to quality questions.
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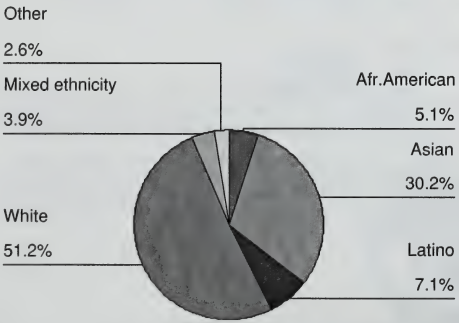
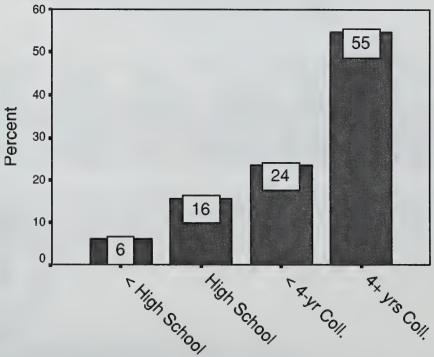
DEMOGRAPHICS

Ethnic Background



Educational Level



Demographic Information

Demographic information for the San Francisco population is included for comparison with the survey sample. Where available, recent population estimates are included, but in some cases, the best information available comes from the 1990 census. Comparisons with the Census are not conclusive, in that: (1) the Census undercounted certain groups within the City, and (2) population characteristics have changed since 1990. For example, we know from State population data that the age distribution of San Francisco's population has shifted toward older residents during the 1990s. We expect that it has shifted toward more educated residents as well.

A) How many people live in your household?

	1	2	3	4	5	6 OR MORE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey	22%	36%	16%	14%	6%	6%	1866
1997 Survey	22%	36%	16%	14%	6%	6%	1164
1990 Census	39%	30%	13%	9%	4%	5%	

- As in 1997, people who live alone are underrepresented in the sample of 1998.
- More survey respondents in the North and Central sections of the City live in small households than in the West and Southeast.

B) How long have you lived in San Francisco?

	LESS THAN 1 YEAR	1 TO 4 YEARS	5 TO 9 YEARS	10 TO 19 YEARS	OVER 19 YEARS	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey	2%	15%	16%	22%	45%	1912
1997 Survey	3%	15%	19%	29%	44%	1183
1998 Combined	17%			83%		
1990 Census	27%			73%		

- The survey sample includes a higher than expected proportion of people who have been in San Francisco five years or longer. The gap between the survey sample and the Census is about the same in 1998 as in 1997.
- Respondents in the Western region of the City have been in San Francisco more time on average than those in the Northern region.
- Mailing lists for individuals inevitably omit a lot of people who have been in the City less than one year. However, the telephone interviews, which do not depend on reaching identified individuals, include a larger proportion of recent residents.

Demographic Information (continued)

C) Do you own or rent your home?

	OWN	RENT	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey *(adult individuals)*	44%	56%	1893
1997 Survey *(adult individuals)*	42%	58%	1179
1998 data from SF Rent Board *(households)**	35%	65%	

* These figures are consistent with 1990 Census data.

- As in 1997, survey respondents in the North and Central sections of the city include more renters than in the West and Southeast.
- Some of the difference between the percentage of renters in the survey sample and the benchmark is a result of the difference in household size. Renters tend to have fewer individuals per household than homeowners do, so the percentage of renter individuals is smaller than the percentage of renter households. (Data were not available for individuals.)

D) What is your sex?

	FEMALE	MALE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey	51%	49%	1905
1997 Survey	54%	46%	1179
1996 SF Population (Cal. Department of Finance)	51%	49%	

E) What is your age?

	Under 20	20 TO 29	30 TO 44	45 TO 59	60 TO 74	OVER 74	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey	1%	16%	34%	25%	16%	8%	1897
1997 Survey	1%	16%	32%	25%	17%	9%	1182
1996 SF Population (Cal. Department of Finance)	2%	16%	37%	22%	14%	9%	

- The ages of survey respondents closely resemble the San Francisco population as estimated by the State Department of Finance.
- Survey respondents in the West section are older, on average than in other sections of the City.
- The mail survey reached more people aged 60 and older than did our phone calls, while the telephone method was more likely to reach those under 30 years of age.

Demographic Information (continued)

F) Which of these comes closest to describing your sexual orientation?

	BISEXUAL	GAY/LESBIAN	HETEROSEXUAL	OTHER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey	4%	10%	83%	3%	1749
1997 Survey	5%	9%	82%	4%	1094
1996 Survey	5%	13%	77%	5%	1660

- The Central section of the City has the highest proportion of gays and lesbians, at 22%.
- We do not have a benchmark against which to measure how well our sample represents the City. However, the proportions have not changed significantly in the three years of the survey.
- Some respondents may not have been familiar with the terms used in this question.

G) Which of these comes closest to describing your ethnic background?

	AFRICAN-AMER./BLACK	ASIAN OR PACIFIC ISL.	LATINO/ HISPANIC	NATIVE AMER./INDIAN	WHITE/ CAUCASIAN	MIXED OR OTHER	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey	5%	30%	7%	<1%	51%	7%	1864
1997 Survey	5%	30%	7%	<1%	50%	7%	1160
1996 SF Adult Pop. (Cal. Dept. of Finance)	9%	31%	14%	<1%	45%	0%	

- African-American and Latino San Franciscans are under-represented in the survey sample. **Some portion of the difference may reflect the inclusion of a mixed ethnicity option on the survey**, which is not included in the U.S. census, on which the State Dept. of Finance estimates above are based.
- Relative to other areas of the City,
  - the Southeast has a higher proportion of African-American and Latino/Hispanic respondents;
  - the West has a higher proportion of Asian respondents; and
  - the Central and Northern sections have a higher proportion of white respondents.

Demographic Information (continued)

H) What is the highest level of education you have completed?

	LESS THAN HIGH SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	LESS THAN 4 YRS COLLEGE	COLLEGE OR POSTGRADUATE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey	6%	16%	24%	55%	1888
1997 Survey	6%	18%	28%	48%	1165
1990 Census	22%	18%	27%	33%	

- The survey sample includes a higher proportion of college graduates than the population as reflected in the 1990 Census. (These data may be outdated, given changes during the last eight years.) The 1998 respondents are more likely than the 1997 respondents to have completed four years of college or more.
- Higher education levels generally correspond with higher incomes. In general, we find more educated survey respondents being more satisfied with costs of recreation programs and Muni fares.
- Respondents from the North and Central regions of the City are more likely to have four years or more of college than the respondents from the other parts of the city.

I) How many hours a week do you work in paid employment?

	NONE	1 TO 14	15 TO 35	35 OR MORE	NUMBER OF RESPONSES
1998 Survey	15%	3%	14%	68%	1571
1997 Survey	29%	3%	12%	56%	1061
1990 Census	30%	3%	12%	55%	

- As one would expect, employment status varies by age: most people over 60 and under 20 are not employed, while most of those between ages of 20 and 59 work 35 or more hours a week. Respondents under 20 are more likely to work part time or not work at all compared to other age groups.
- A significantly higher percentage of the respondents are employed 35 or more hours a week in 1998, compared to the Census and to the 1997 survey. This increase may reflect positive economic changes in San Francisco.

SURVEY PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

A. Purpose of the Survey

The 1998 Citizen Survey is part of an ongoing effort to measure and improve the performance of City government in San Francisco. Increasingly, government auditor-controllers are reporting on service efforts and accomplishments as well as financial performance. Everyone needs information on the extent to which services are having their desired results; that is, the *outcomes* of the City's efforts. One of the most direct ways to measure outcomes is to ask the users of City services.

This is San Francisco's third annual Citizen Survey. This year, we ask many of the same questions as in the two prior years, in order to measure changes in people's experience and perceptions of City government services. In addition, in 1998 we introduced two new questions, on water quality and telecommunications. Comparisons to the prior survey outcomes will become more useful as we compile several years of data, and changes in citizen satisfaction over time will help determine the success of policy and budget initiatives.

In interpreting the results of the survey, it is worth noting that many factors influence the ratings of a particular service, including different expectations for different types of services. Similar surveys in other areas have found that certain services are consistently rated more highly than others. For example, fire departments and libraries get higher ratings than transit in other cities, as well as in San Francisco.

B. Which Services? What kinds of Questions?

The 1998 survey covers parks, recreation programs, Muni, libraries, public safety, water quality, and telecommunications, as well as a question about City services overall. Survey questions were developed to meet several requirements, including:

(1) the services or issues in question are of concern to a large number of San Franciscans;

(2) services are visible to or used by enough people that a large number of survey respondents can rate them;

(3) survey questions provide information that is not more easily obtained from another source; and

(4) all questions fit on a one-piece mailer and do not take so long to complete as to discourage responses.

The omission of a service area does not reflect a lack of importance to the City, but rather a lack of space or an assessment that a citywide survey is not the best way to measure performance in that area. For example, we omitted questions about public schools and the fire department from the survey, after learning in 1996 that only a small proportion of our sample had sufficient experience to give an opinion of these services.

C. Survey Methods and Response Rates

We surveyed a total of 1942 San Franciscans, using two methods – a mailed questionnaire and telephone interviews. Of the total sample, 80% were surveyed by mail and 20% by telephone.

1. Written Questionnaire

In February 1998, the Controller's office sent questionnaires to 5,500 randomly selected San Franciscans, with a letter explaining the purpose of the survey and how to complete it. Reminder postcards and a second copy of the survey followed after a few weeks. The pool of potential respondents was reduced to 4,760 by surveys that were undeliverable because of incorrect or out-of-date addresses. By early April (our cutoff point to start analyzing results), we had received 1,563 responses, for a response rate of 33%.

We numbered each survey in order to track responses, but asked respondents to remove the page with their name and address. Individual responses have been kept confidential. The numbering system allowed us to tailor our follow-up mailings to nonrespondents only, and to group responses by zip code.

Before mailing the survey, we sent out a postcard in English, Spanish and Chinese with telephone numbers to call for a survey in Chinese or Spanish. Demand for the Chinese and Spanish language surveys was small.

2. Telephone Interviews

For the first year, we also surveyed 379 San Franciscans by telephone. The interviews included the same questions as the written questionnaire. The response rate was 64%, out of 596 completed phone calls.

Although we were unable to provide translation for this small sample, residents who were unable to complete the telephone interview because of limited English-speaking ability were tracked by native language. Controller's office staff attempted to reach Spanish and Chinese-speaking residents in order to offer the written survey as an alternative.

D. Analysis by Neighborhood

We grouped City zip codes into four large areas. [1] They encompass the following neighborhoods:

Central: 94102, 94103, 94114, 94117, 94131 (Haight, Castro, Noe Valley, Civic Center, South of Market, Diamond Heights, Glen Park, Twin Peaks, Buena Vista, Fillmore, Glen Canyon Park).

North: 94104, 94105, 94108, 94109, 94111, 94115, 94123, 94133 (North Beach, Chinatown, Marina, Pacific Heights, Western Addition, Russian Hill, Nob Hill, Telegraph Hill, Financial District, Cow Hollow).

Southeast: 94107, 94110, 94112, 94124, 94134 (Mission, Potrero Hill, Bayview, Hunters Point, Excelsior, Ingleside, Visitacion Valley, Bernal Heights, Portola, Ocean View).

West: 94116, 94118, 94121, 94122, 94127, 94132 (Richmond, Sunset, Stonestown, Parkside, Forest Hill, Seacliff, Park Merced, Presidio Heights, Laurel Heights, West Portal, St. Francis Wood, Miraloma Park).

[1] Using large areas allowed for sample sizes large enough to determine some differences among groups. Boundaries were chosen to provide demographic as well as geographic similarity. There was no grouping scheme that made sense for all questions; for example, the Mission zip code of 94110 is included in the Southeast group, but it is more like the Central group for the purposes of Muni routes. Similarly, while the Haight area zip code 94117 is included in the Central group, it is more like the West group in terms of visits to Golden Gate Park.

A small number of responses are excluded from the neighborhood analysis, from respondents who deleted tracking numbers from their surveys, and thus could not be associated with a zip code. Appendix A includes a map of geographic areas and breakdown of the sample by large area and zip code.

E. How Well do the Survey Respondents Represent San Franciscans?

Respondents to the 1998 Citizen Survey differ in some respects from the San Francisco population. In comparing demographic characteristics with data on San Franciscans as a whole, survey respondents:

- are more educated;
- are more likely to be full-time workers;
- live in larger households;
- include fewer African-American and Latino residents; and
- have been in San Francisco longer

than the population as a whole.

Within the survey group, those reached by mail and telephone also differ from each other in some characteristics. In some areas, the addition of the telephone survey improves the representativeness of the sample, while in others, it contributes to the distortion.

- **Age –** the mail survey reached more people aged 60 and older than did our phone calls, while telephone was more likely to reach those under 30 years of age. The addition of the telephone survey this year seems to have evened out a bias in prior years toward older residents.

- **Education –** telephone survey respondents had higher levels of education on average than those who sent in mail questionnaires. Inclusion of the telephone survey seems to have increased the distortion toward a highly educated survey sample.

- **Ethnicity –** the telephone survey obtained higher proportions of African-American and white respondents, but fewer Asian respondents, than the mail survey.

Some of the distortion in our sample is a result of who we are able to reach – the composition of our mailing list and the distribution of telephone numbers. Another source is **nonresponse bias**, which occurs when those who choose to respond differ in demographic characteristics, and opinions, from those who do not respond. The difference in responses between the first and second mailings of the survey suggests that additional efforts bring in more of the people who are underrepresented in the sample. We continue to pursue new ways of generating a more representative group of survey respondents.

F. Sample Source

The mail survey respondents' names and addresses came from two sources: State Department of Motor Vehicles records and voter registrations. These files were merged, and duplicate records were eliminated where possible.

We used a stratified sampling method, selecting a specified number of names from each zip code, in order to reflect that zip code's proportion of the adult population of the City, and to compensate for low response rates in some zip codes in previous surveys.

Telephone numbers for interviews were generated randomly, and respondents were not asked their identities, but only their zip codes. Exchanges were selected in order to get respondents from the four large geographic areas identified for survey analysis.

G. Sampling Error

With a total sample size of 1942, the estimated sampling error is about ±2.2% at the 95% confidence level. This means that we are 95% confident that all adult San Francisco residents would produce responses to each survey question within a little more than two percentage points of the results obtained from this sample. For example, 46% of survey respondents rated park grounds as "good"; we are 95% sure that if we asked all San Francisco residents, we would get a response between about 44% and 48% for this same item.

Sampling errors are larger for sample subgroups, such as residents of the Central part of the City, and for questions that received fewer responses, such as ratings of recreation programs.

This measurable error, which results from using a sample to represent a whole population, does not account for other sources of error which are more difficult to measure, such as nonresponse bias.

H. Acknowledgments

We are indebted to the City of Portland, particularly Richard Tracy, Audits Director, and Ellen Jean, Auditor, who shared information and samples of Portland's Citizen Survey and performance measures report, from which we have borrowed heavily.

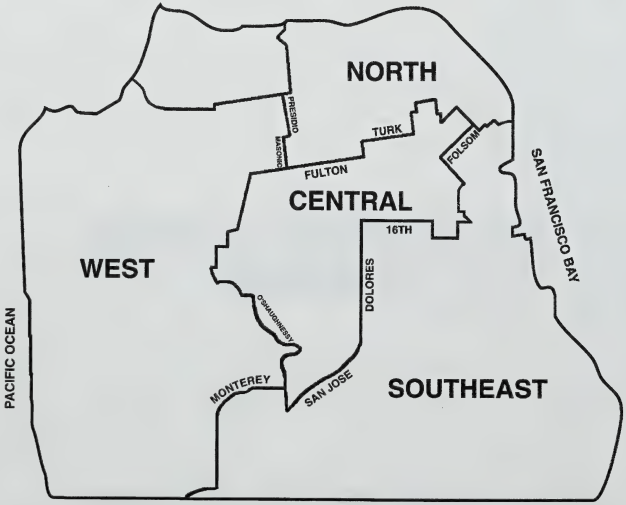
Valuable research assistance for this report was provided by Geneviève Ste-Marie, with guidance from Terra Schehr, of the Public Research Institute at San Francisco State University. Marianna Marysheva and Daniel Van Harley, interns in the Controller's Office, assisted in preparing this report.

We extend thanks also to David German, Salla Vaerma, Linda Zane, and other staff of the City's Reproduction and Mail Services for assistance with the design, printing and mailing of the survey questionnaire, as well as the printing of this report.

All of the report's conclusions, and any weaknesses, are the responsibility of the Controller's office.

APPENDIX A:
Map and List of Geographic Areas

Map of Geographic Areas for Survey Analysis



Geographic Areas for Survey Analysis

Area	Zip Code	Neighborhoods	SF Adult Population (1)		Mail Survey 1998		Phone Survey 1998		Total Sample 1998	
Central	94102	Civic Center	25,635	4.2%	64	4.1%	11	2.9%	75	3.9%
	94103	South of Market	16,363	2.7%	33	2.1%	8	2.1%	41	2.1%
	94114	Castro, Noe Valley	28,312	4.6%	97	6.2%	24	6.3%	121	6.2%
	94117	Haight-Ashbury, Buena Vista	33,618	5.5%	75	4.8%	19	5.0%	94	4.8%
	94131	Diamond Hts, Glen Park, Twin Peaks	26,032	4.2%	86	5.5%	24	6.3%	110	5.7%
			129,960	21.1%	355	22.7%	86	22.7%	441	22.7%
North	94104	Financial District	683	0.1%	1	0.1%	-	0.0%	1	0.1%
	94105	Financial District South of Market	2,551	0.4%	6	0.4%	1	0.3%	7	0.4%
	94108	Chinatown, Union Square	12,134	2.0%	34	2.2%	1	0.3%	35	1.8%
	94109	Russian Hill, Nob Hill	47,945	7.8%	105	6.7%	10	2.6%	115	5.9%
	94111	Embarcadero	3,117	0.5%	3	0.2%	-	0.0%	3	0.2%
	94115	Pacific Heights, Western Addition	25,983	4.2%	61	3.9%	18	4.7%	79	4.1%
	94123	Marina, Cow Hollow	22,680	3.7%	60	3.8%	7	1.8%	67	3.5%
	94133	Telegraph Hill, North Beach	22,761	3.7%	50	3.2%	7	1.8%	57	2.9%
			137,854	22.4%	320	20.5%	44	11.6%	364	18.7%
Southeast	94107	Potrero Hill, South of Market	12,100	2.0%	24	1.5%	12	3.2%	36	1.9%
	94110	Mission, Bernal Heights	58,955	9.6%	132	8.4%	35	9.2%	167	8.6%
	94112	Excelsior, Ingleside, Ocean View	49,826	8.1%	126	8.1%	30	7.9%	156	8.0%
	94124	Bayview, Hunters Point	21,697	3.5%	53	3.4%	9	2.4%	62	3.2%
	94134	Portola, Visitacion Valley	23,378	3.8%	62	4.0%	9	2.4%	71	3.7%
			165,956	26.9%	397	25.4%	95	25.1%	492	25.3%
West	94116	Parkside, Forest Hill	32,574	5.3%	91	5.8%	21	5.5%	112	5.8%
	94118	Laurel Heights, Richmond	33,791	5.5%	83	5.3%	26	6.9%	109	5.6%
	94121	Richmond, Seacliff	37,596	6.1%	98	6.3%	25	6.6%	123	6.3%
	94122	Sunset	39,690	6.4%	101	6.5%	49	12.9%	150	7.7%
	94127	W. Portal, Miraloma Pk., St. Francis Wd	14,135	2.3%	36	2.3%	16	4.2%	52	2.7%
	94132	Stonestown, Park Merced	19,129	3.1%	35	2.2%	14	3.7%	49	2.5%
			176,915	28.7%	444	28.4%	151	39.8%	595	30.6%
Other	94129	Presidio	2,966	0.5%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
	94130	Treasure Island	2,671	0.4%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	0.0%
	94100	Other/Unknown	-	0.0%	47	3.0%	3	0.8%	50	2.6%
			5,637	0.9%	47	3.0%	3	0.8%	50	2.6%
Total			616,322	100.0%	1,563	100.0%	379	100.0%	1,942	100.0%

(1) Sourcebook of Zip Code Demographics, 1997 ed.